

Knowledge of truth is the best means of growth.

Ignorance may breed emotion but never devotion.

Satan is always watching the Lord's harvest field.

God gives good seed ; it is ours to provide good ground.

Better fewer interests in life and more devotion to those that are essential.

#### THOSE WHO HEAR PREACHING

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Jesus spoke to the people in parables, and that was one reason why they heard him gladly. A parable is an illustration which makes truth more clearly visible to the mental vision.

"Behold a sower went forth to sow"—so begins one of the parables. Notice that in the parable the sower is always the same person and the seed is the same in kind and precious. Yet there is a difference of results, and on what does this difference depend? Clearly on the varied nature of the soil.

The seed is the word of God. The thots of God are not grains of sand, barren where they rest, but precious seed, which have vitality and growth and reproduction. Fruitful, indeed, they are, and the world will rejoice in the spreading and completed harvest.

Take a handful of seed from the granary—the Bible—and look at it. "God is love"—let that drop into the soul, and it brings forth love to God in return. Here is another seed, "The wages of sin is death ;" and another beside it, "The gift of God is eternal life ;" and still another, "I am the resurrection and the life." By thoughts men move the world, and the thoughts of God, how mighty they are, and what harvests do they bring!

As for the sower, that means everyone whose work is to scatter truth, especially the preacher. In such work there is to be no monopoly. Do all the good you can, O, Christian, and do it in the best way you can. But if you follow in the footsteps of him "who went about doing good," you will have need of two things—great industry and great patience. So much to be done, and so much that is done seems barren of results ; but yet work on and murmur not, for work that is done for God cannot perish.

Four kinds of hearers in the average congregation :

First. The wayside hearer. He comes late to the church and prefers a back seat.

Perhaps he comes from force of habit or from curiosity to hear the new preacher, or the old one, on some particular topic. If he lives in the city, he likes to be a wanderer among the churches. The fact is, he loves all the churches so much that he loves no one church in particular, and his face beams on many a congregation. He belongs to what some call the "floating class," and he floats far and near in different directions, but mainly toward the church which has the largest congregation and the most artistic

music, which is, of course, the most devotional and celestial.

He is susceptible to truth, and he is impressed ; but only for a moment, for he hardly knows what impresses him. A stray thought comes in his soul, a stray remark from a companion as he leaves the church, and no trace of the good seed remains. His heart is hard even as the trodden wayside.

Second. The critical hearer. He is a man of culture, or thinks he is, and highly refined. To be sure he never preached, and his Bible knowledge is not deep as the ocean depths ; but he knows—so he says—how to give advice to the preacher, and he gives it. One grace he certainly brings out in the preacher—patience. This hearer cannot hear truth unless conveyed in musical sentences. The preacher who is faultless in tone, gesture, looks, great as a scholar and orator—that is his ideal, and he is still trying to find him. To such a hearer the voice is more than truth, and manner more than thought. No pure water for him if it comes out of the old oaken bucket. It must come from a cup of crystal or of gold, or he will not drink at all. It is well for a few to have the critical faculty, but, like a fine-spirited horse, it should be guided by reason and curbed, or it may carry its rider to destruction.

Third. There is the hearer to whom truth is as seed among thorns. Both grow, but the thorns grow the faster of the two. "The cares of this world," how they eat like moths ; how they tarnish and destroy like rust—insidious and destructive ! The truth germinates, and dies before the fruit of holy living appears. Cares spring up in the soul, and some of them ought never to appear. And then "the deceitfulness of riches." Not money is to be dreaded, but the love of it ; not wealth, but the false reliance placed upon it. Many there are who would worship the true God if it were not that, like the old Israelites, they were prostrate in the dust, in an act of solemn worship around the golden calf.

Fourth. Then there is last, and best of all, the good-ground hearer. He enters the church with radiant face, and then bows in silent prayer that God may bless the message of truth and the messenger. He has "a good and honest heart." He is spiritually minded, and therefore spiritual truth has a force and beauty for him which it has not for others. He extracts good from a poor sermon, as the bee extracts honey from the buckwheat blossom. The poorest sermon he thinks has something very good about it, and that is the text. He prays for his pastor, even at the family altar, for he has one, and the pastor does not think he is a fanatic. He lives well, and brings forth in his life the fruits of holy living ; and when he is in the dying hour he will say to weeping friends, "Call me not back," for "it is beautiful to be with God."

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#### That Bad Boy

Baptist Teacher.

A distressed teacher comes with an occasionally recurring question, not infrequently asked in one form or another, at Sunday-school conventions and institutes : "What would you do with a belligerent boy who defies your authority and will not act in an orderly and proper manner?"

To begin with, the badness is not all with the boys ; not so frequently, perhaps, are girls also at fault, but sometimes they are as bad as boys, tho the manifestations of their badness are along different lines, but they are quite as exasperating.

There are difficulties in the problem that are not easily solved. The attendance upon Sunday-school is voluntary, not compulsory ; the pupil therefore can absent himself if not pleased. Punitive measures other than exclusion cannot be enforced, because there is no possibility of absolute control. Social considerations interject themselves also ; parents generally side with their children, even tho the latter are in fault, and they seldom admit existence of a fault, because it is an implied reflection upon themselves. Discipline is the more difficult of enforcement also because of its possible reflex consequences ; to deal severely with a child may array a whole family against the church, and difficulties sometimes spread like wildfire, until they become seriously, if not completely, destructive.

Yet a Sunday-school without discipline would better be abolished. It must not be regarded as a *reformatory* (in the technical sense of that term) for bad boys and girls who defy restraint and condemn reproof. It must be a *school*, with all which that word implies, if it does its appropriate work. To this end proper order suitable discipline must necessarily be maintained, tho in the most loving manner and with tenderness in its methods.

Let us drop mere sentimentality and manage in accord with sound principles. Win the boy, if you can ; influence him by moral suasion, if possible ; treat with his parents, if practicable, not in the spirit of complaint but in the spirit of helping to develop the best in the boy, as his true friend ; be patient with him, and be not too sharp in reproof ; above all, never in the least degree discount any good that can by any possibility be discovered in him, and encourage the slightest tendency toward improvement. Do not fail to be absolutely just in your judgement of him. Pray to be so guided that you may save him. Work in the spirit of your prayer.

Suppose, at the worst, that all efforts fail ; what then? Shall you be wise in destroying the nine who would do right for the sake of the one who is contumacious? Is the whole of less value than a fraction? Are there no rights of others to be considered alongside of the one who is disobedient and disorderly? Exclusion, then, may be the *dernier ressort*, and perfectly justifiable. But be very sure that the failure to succeed with the boy is not with yourself. Follow him still ; win him